
Report to Fire and Rescue Service Scrutiny Committee

18 June 2021

HMICFRS Cause of Concern Revisit Letter

Report by Chief Fire Officer

Electoral division(s): All

Summary

In February 2021, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) revised the service for a third time to review the progress against our causes of concern. This letter (detailed at Appendix A) to West Sussex Fire and Rescue Service sets out the assessment of the progress to date as well as the investment and commitment of the county council.

Focus for Scrutiny

The Committee is asked to examine the letter (attached at Appendix A) received from the HMICFRS and consider whether there is any learning from the context that should be considered for inclusion as part of work programme planning for the Committee.

Proposal

1 Background and context

- 1.1 In February 2021, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) conducted a third revisit to West Sussex Fire and Rescue Service to review progress against our action plan.
- 1.2 For this inspection, the HMICFRS were focused on the causes of concern and the progress that had been made against the improvement plan.
- 1.3 West Sussex Fire and Rescue Service were inspected between 22 February and 25 February 2021. The letter at Appendix A summarises the findings of that inspection.
- 1.4 This revisit is the first time that the HMICFRS has specifically focussed its visit on reviewing progress against all the causes of concern.
- 1.5 The report highlights that the governance and scrutiny arrangements are now more effective than the last time that the service had a revisit and that significant progress has been made on the causes of concerns.
- 1.6 There was a clear correlation between the level of investment in people and the action plan and to the positive nature of the revisit letter. A huge level of work has been undertaken to get us to this point and, with still further to go, the letter provides a clear stepping-stone in the right direction.

- 1.7 The HMICFRS concludes the letter acknowledging that the pandemic will have affected the pace of change that the officers have been able to progress but despite this highlighted the amount of improvement work and change in the service continues to be significant.
- 1.8 The conclusion also highlights that in the next inspection, further assessment of progress will be undertaken against these recommendations with a view to closing them, which demonstrates clear confidence in the activity undertaken to date.
- 1.9 The HMICFRS proposes to restart the second round of effectiveness and efficiency fire and rescue inspections in spring 2021, when it will follow up on the findings.

2 Finance

- 2.1 Conclusions from this inspection have no financial implications to the Council.

3 Risk implications and mitigations

- 3.1 The Fire Authority and members of the Fire and Rescue Service Scrutiny Committee will continue to monitor the performance of the fire and rescue service to ensure that any risk from ceasing this process is mitigated through effective performance management through the Performance and Assurance Framework.

4 Policy alignment and compliance

- 4.1 This report has positive implications for the community as it supports the continued improvement journey of the Fire and Rescue Service to all residents in West Sussex.

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Appendix A – HMICFRS Cause of Concern Revisit letter

Background papers

None